New Canadian History Requirement for High School

Department of Education

News Releases

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Education Minister Jane Purves is planning to make Canadian History a mandatory course for high school graduation. This change will help to ensure that all students leave school with a sense of their history and heritage.

"Every high school graduate should know the history of Canada and of Nova Scotia, but the reality is many do not," said Ms. Purves. "It's time to make Canadian History a priority subject in our high schools."

Just 77 of 11,631 Grade 12 students, or fewer than one per cent, are enrolled in Canadian History courses in Nova Scotia high schools this year. Unlike most provinces, Nova Scotia does not require high school students to complete a Canadian History course to graduate, and most students take other social studies electives.

The Department of Education is launching a curriculum development process aimed at making Canadian History mandatory for all Grade 11 students in the fall of 2002. A pilot course will be introduced in the fall of 2001 following consultation with school boards, parents, teachers and students.

Ms. Purves said there has been growing concern among parents, academics, organizations such as the Royal Canadian Legion, and others that students are graduating without an understanding of Canadian history.

An Angus Reid poll in 1998 showed that many young Canadians, and particularly those in Atlantic Canada, aren't familiar with some of the key people and events in their history.

"Nova Scotia students must have a good sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they have the potential to go," said Ms. Purves. "We have an obligation to make sure they get that in school through the study of Canadian history."

The minister also noted the study of history contributes to the development of critical and creative thinking, which is part of improved student literacy, a priority of the school system at all levels.

Canadian History will be shifted from the Grade 12 to Grade 11 level to avoid scheduling conflicts with other required courses, such as Global Studies 12. Students will also be able to meet the new requirement by completing Histoire de l'Acadie et du Canada

11, African Canadian Studies 11, or Mi'kmaq Studies 10.

Topics for the new course are expected to include: First Nations experiences and contributions to Canada; Canadian contributions in the First and Second World Wars and peacekeeping; French-English relations; and the evolution of a democratic society.

FOR BROADCAST USE:

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